

**Board of Health Meeting
February 12, 2004**

PRESENT: David Osler, M.D., Chairman
Babette Mello, Member
Jack Vondras, Health Department Director
Cesar Pungirum, Tobacco Control Program

The hearing was called to order at 4:35 PM.

Dr. Osler welcomed new Board member Babette Mello and asked her to introduce herself. Ms. Mello stated that she is eagerly looking forward to working on the Board and detailed her background in the medical field. She stated that she worked at the Somerville Hospital and was a Licensed Practical Nurse.

In light of Cecilia Sosa-Patterson's absence Dr. Osler suggested that the minutes from last months meeting not be voted on at this time. Ms. Mello had not yet been appointed to the Board during the presentation therefore the vote was deferred until next months meeting.

The Board members reviewed the packet presented to them and read a memo from Alderman Roche relative to a resolution he was sponsoring that evening to the Board of Aldermen. The Resolution asked the Board to reconsider their decision not to hold a public hearing regarding the smoking ban, as public input is vital to the integrity of the decision making of any civic process. It was decided because the resolution had not yet been presented to the Bd. of Aldermen and was still in draft form and we did not have the full Board of Health present, the vote would be deferred until the next meeting. A resolution submitted by Alderman Provost, dated January 22, 2004 was also reviewed and held into record stating that the Board of Health has jurisdiction to regulate the practice of smoking tobacco products, etc. (see attached document for complete resolution).

Tobacco Update:

Cesar Pungirum gave a synopsis of the Public Hearing held on January 8, 2004.

He stated that there was no significant support for private clubs to be part of the ban. Only three bar representatives presented their views and all spoke against including private clubs in the ban. A recommendation was made to develop and conduct a survey of all private clubs. The aim is to look at membership criteria along with monitoring club access by the general public. A letter was read from Eileen Sullivan supporting the exclusion of private clubs but suggested the survey would be a good benchmark for stating overall factual evidence.

Tobacco Reports:

Two complete rounds of tobacco compliance have been completed at retail establishments. Four sales to minors occurred during each round. This equates to a seven point two percent average, which is relatively low compared to most cities and towns since the budget cuts.

He also presented an update on the statewide ban. Three conference committee members of the House have been named and the expectation is for the Senate to do the same. The hope is to look at both proposals and come to a compromise.

Oxycontin/Suicide Prevention Up-date:

Jack Vondras presented that the mayor asked for a work group with the goal of looking at strategies for prevention. Ideally, the composition of the group will include addiction experts, researchers, community activists and a doctor.

Suicide – a similar planning strategy is in the planning process as well. The intent is take a community wide approach dealing with mental health issues. Jack stated that treatment beds have been cut 60% statewide and that CASPAR laid off ninety out of one hundred and fifty staff members. He said the group would look at intervention and treatment as well as the pharmaceuticals used in treatment plans.

Grant Updates:

Substance abuse – \$75,000.00 of federal funds will be funded through the coalition to deal with environmental alcohol strategies and substance abuse. Funding will be transferred from the Cambridge Health Alliance to the Health Department.

A new \$100,000.00 grant for a science based strategy will be used to mobilize the community to discourage underage drinking and substance abuse. Jack noted that alcohol is the number one choice of substance abuse amongst adolescents.

A \$30,000.00 – two year Grant from the National Suicide Foundation to study and analyze why there is such a high level of suicide contemplation for Somerville Youth in our community. The committee will also look at why Somerville students are above the state average for suicide risk. These monies will set up a survey structure that will initiate focus groups to figure this out as well as providing assistance via the “Teen Connection” for Mental Health services for those at risk.

HRSA Grant – two-year Federal grant looking at the integration of physical and behavioral health issues. This program will conduct a two-year needs assessment on suicide mapping with a focus on prevention, intervention and treatment. The grant will be funded for \$50,000.00 for the first two planning years and \$200,000.00 for future years. Mayor Curtatone has identified this has an important issue for Somerville residents.

Discussion followed relative to the High School clinic. Dr. Osler stated that when it was first started the biggest perceived need was mental health and how it is still an ongoing situation. Dialogue continued about the subject of “Somerville Cares About Prevention”. Jack listed members of the coalition including the Director, two Pharmacists and the need for a volunteer Doctor as well as several community activists. The hope was that the Physician is someone who practices in Somerville. He stated the committee would meet two hours a month and the sub group will meet weekly. Babette said we should have a positive outcome because of the public interest and concern.

Strategic Planning:

Statement as where we want to go as a Board.

Nail Salon regulations

Animal breeding.

Dr. Osler suggested we request samples of policies and procedures from other cities and towns pertaining to nail salons and animal breeding for review.

He also suggested we work with Cecilia to set up speakers for presentations for the March, April and May meetings.

Meeting adjourned @ 5:30p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled at 4:30 on March 9, 2004.

Respectfully submitted,

Rita VanSteensburg
Administrative Assistant